

A Salute to Caregivers

A SPECIAL FEATURE FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

alzheimer's 
association®

Salute to Caregivers

During Black History Month we salute all caregivers who make a difference in the lives of their loved ones every day. Pat Hightower, a full-time working mom, is one of those caregivers who has dedicated her life to her family. She has been a caregiver for nearly two decades, first for her grandmother for four years and currently for her mother for the last 13 years, both impacted by dementia.

Recognizing the Signs

"Even after caring for my grandmother, it took me awhile to acknowledge my mom had dementia," Pat said. "You have to be aware of any changes of the person, and recognize the signs of dementia. It presents itself very differently. My grandma was very quiet, but my mom is very busy and gets into things. It's all called dementia, but it's not the same."

Demands of Caregiving

"Caregiving is a hard job and many people are not equipped for it," Pat acknowledged. "It especially takes a lot to care for a loved one at home. You need to be prepared, patient and understanding. Especially for the personal care aspect of it, you have to be in that mindset. I take care of my mom how I would take care of myself. I knew I didn't want her going to a nursing home and I wanted to step up to the plate to do this for her. People sometimes ask me if it's too much and I say 'No, it's my mom.'" According to the Alzheimer's Association 2020 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, approximately two-thirds of dementia caregivers are women and over one-third of dementia caregivers are daughters.

Finding Time for Self-care

Pat's home is multi-generational. In addition to her mother, Pat's 22-year old daughter and her 3-month old baby live with her, and Pat is also a foster parent for a one-year old and three-year old children. While they have a busy household, Pat understands the importance of self-care. "I do try to have some 'me-time' to try to pace myself," Pat said. "We have been able to utilize adult day care for my mom, which is a big help. She really enjoys art and has participated in the Memories in the Making program, which fosters creative art expression for those living with dementia."

We salute Pat during Black History Month for her dedication to her family and for helping to create awareness for dementia.



**Pat Hightower and
her Mother, Lois
Milwaukee, WI**